

# **Initial Teacher Training provider case study**

**Sheffield Hallam University**

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## Backgrounds and objectives

Sheffield Hallam University is one of the largest universities in the UK with over 30,000 students. We are one of the country's biggest providers of teacher training. We train over 1000 new teachers every year, and train a quarter of all new teachers in the Yorkshire region.

Over the last few years there has been a decline in applications across the sector due to a UK wide demographic downturn and applicant numbers are set to continually decrease until 2021, resulting in a challenging market for all providers and all courses:

- 12.7k fewer prospective students applied to higher education across all courses in 2018 (-2% by the June deadline vs 2017).
- Larger decreases in application rates are expected in the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber in particular, which are key recruitment areas for the University.

Alongside this, we know from our own research that the routes into teaching can be confusing. There are 3 main routes:

- Undergraduate initial teacher training
- University-led postgraduate initial teacher training
- School-led postgraduate initial teacher training

Our research shows that prospective students feel they are either exposed to too much information about these routes, making it a confusing choice, or only have knowledge of one specific route and are therefore not aware of the different options, which limits their choice.

With a marketplace full of noise and providers 'shouting over one another' by running their own events and communications, the question was whether collectively the providers in South Yorkshire were diluting the teaching offer for prospective students.

In 2017 Sheffield Hallam University began a Department for Education backed social mobility partnership - South Yorkshire Futures (SYF) - which recognises that the quality of teaching has a huge impact on raising the attainment of young people in the region. One of the strands of the programme focuses on teacher recruitment. As part of this strand, all the initial teacher training providers in South Yorkshire and their School Direct partners are working together to improve the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers in our region. The partners include:

- Sheffield Hallam University
- Doncaster ITT Partnership
- Sheffield SCITT
- University of Sheffield

- National Modern Languages SCITT
- Teach First

To demonstrate the University's commitment to the principles of South Yorkshire Futures, the University's annual teacher training recruitment event in September was used as a platform for all teacher training in South Yorkshire, including those routes not involving the University.

The falling numbers of trainees entering the profession had been mirrored by a decline in registrations and attendees at the annual event. By pulling together the offer to students and working as a collective, we aimed to provide an improved event experience which placed prospective students at its heart by bringing all providers together in one place and therefore clarifying the offer. This was backed by all the providers and to our knowledge is the first approach of this kind in the sector.

## **Ambition and objectives**

- Work with our partners to provide an event which inspires entry into the teaching profession and gives impartial advice on the different routes available
- Deliver a neutrally branded event (Get into Teaching in South Yorkshire) which supports the prospective student journey
- Drive a consistent approach to the delivery of school experience which supports applications
- Share communications with partners to enable consistent messaging whilst leveraging individual networks
- Arrest the decline in bookings/attendance – a decline no greater than 2% – at the annual teacher training recruitment event by driving registrations through a comprehensive digital and social media plan

# Strategic approach

## Target audiences

The target audience for the event was undergraduate and postgraduate prospective students looking to enter teaching and gain a teaching qualification.

Key audiences were:

- School leavers – within 60 miles of Sheffield
- Career changers - mature students in the local and wider region
- Progressors - current undergraduate students at Sheffield Hallam and University of Sheffield (particularly those studying education, childhood, or PE and school sport studies)

## Competition

The demographic downturn has created a highly competitive market, and the decline in application numbers is also felt by our competitors, with the percentage decrease being roughly on a par with our own. We also know from our own data that in initial teacher training Sheffield Hallam recruits from a predominantly local market, and we have several large competitors such as Leeds Beckett, Manchester Metropolitan University, Nottingham Trent and York St John on our doorstep. Therefore our approach was to stand out in a busy external environment by creating a simple event proposition.

## Messaging and communications

Sheffield Hallam University neutrally branded the event to ensure that all partners were presented equally and inclusively, and the campaign featured key messages, such as:

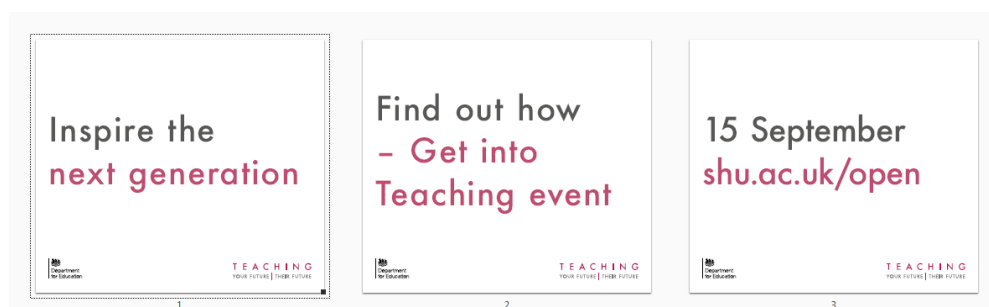


Figure 1: Campaign key message on inspiring the next generation

Source: Sheffield Hallam University



**Figure 2: Campaign key message on helping young people reach their potential**

Source: Sheffield Hallam University

The messages were displayed using the Department for Education's Get into Teaching marketing toolkit to ensure the focus was on teaching as a profession and not pushing any one particular provider. The name of the event was also changed to 'Get into Teaching' to align with the nationwide campaign. The messages were shared with other providers for their use.

Event communications were also neutrally branded from the point of registration, and reinforced the 'Why teach in South Yorkshire?' messaging. Crucially, the follow-up communications featured opportunities which providers had supplied for prospective students to gain valuable school experience and support the next steps in the recruitment journey. This was the first ever coordinated approach to making sure prospective students were supported by gaining real-life experience, which we know from our research is a key factor in the application process. Prospective students are more likely to make informed decisions around entering the profession after experiencing a real-life school environment.

New content was developed to help support campaign activity and for use at the event. This content focused on how the teaching profession fulfils career ambitions, whilst honestly addressing the perceived challenges of a teaching career with an emphasis on support, workload, work-life balance, placements, and costs. Some examples of these in video form are given below:

- [Why be a teacher?](#)
- What are the different routes into teaching? ([Undergraduate](#), [School-led](#), [University-led](#))
- [What are the challenges and rewards of a career in teaching?](#)
- [My placement experience](#)

## Marketing channels for driving registrations

The content above, in addition to a range of other inspirational stories, was used to form a campaign aimed at driving registrations for the event. The stories, quotes and videos were used across digital and social media and optimised according to engagement, click-

through rates and completion of the booking form. They also formed part of our CRM plan and were shared with partners to use through their own channels.

The campaign had a small marketing budget of £12k and so the channels selected to reach the different audiences in the target market were:

Media	Cost
UCAS ITT media - email to registrants who had indicated interest in teaching qualifications and display advertising	£1,391
Google AdWords to take advantage of active search traffic	£2,250
Paid for social media - majority conducted on Facebook	£826

**Table 1: Media and budget targeted at the school leavers audience.**

Source: Sheffield Hallam University

Media	Cost
Google AdWords to take advantage of active search traffic	£2,250
Prospects media - email and Facebook retargeting to registrants who had indicated interest in PGCE and education courses	£2,457
Paid for social media - majority conducted on Facebook	£826

**Table 2: Media and budget targeted at the career changer audience.**

Source: Sheffield Hallam University

Media	Cost
CRM - using Sheffield Hallam University owned data to send targeted communications to enquirers for teaching/education courses	n/a

**Table 3: Media and budget targeted at the progressors audience.**

Source: Sheffield Hallam University

This activity came to a total of £10k. Remaining budget was used to support event branding and on-the-day materials.



Visibility of the campaign was high, serving:

- 1,334,103 total impressions
  - 860,825 impressions from display, search and third party email insertions
  - 389,948 impressions from paid social media
  - 83,330 impressions from organic social media with 503 engagements and 3,729 media views

## **Event strategy**

The event was designed to inspire students, providing them with an impartial advice zone before entering a 'marketplace' area with all regional providers represented.

Prospective students attended a welcome talk which covered the impact and difference teachers make to individual lives, while authentically communicating the challenges, rewards, experiences and benefits of teaching. Partner schools brought in pupils to assist by guiding visitors at the welcome desks and putting on performances, making sure the children/young people were visible to those considering teaching as a career.

Inspirational speakers at the event came from a range of backgrounds, including newly qualified teachers, teachers with many years of experience, and senior leaders and principals from across the region. This built upon past events and the excellent reputation of the event, which has featured some of our own inspirational students such as a teacher education student Hassun, who volunteered at the Calais migrant camp. [His story was featured on our website.](#)

# Measuring success

## Impact

Marketing activity was measured in terms of visibility, engagement and conversion to book. The media and paid social campaign was successful in generating awareness and bookings:

- 47% of bookings were driven by the media and social media campaign
- Get into Teaching in South Yorkshire bookings were up by +30% versus 2017, and reversed a 2 year decline
- Attendance at the event versus 2017 increased by +22%

As a result of the increase in registrations there is now a larger data pool which can be used to convert interest into action, which puts the region in a more favourable position for 2019.

## Learnings

The initial teacher training providers in South Yorkshire who worked together on the event gave positive feedback on its planning and execution. The event showed that when providers work together there can be a major impact on the region, and the approach of branding the event neutrally demonstrated the commitment to place students and their needs at the heart of the recruitment process.

The follow-up communications after the event followed this spirit of collaboration by jointly supporting prospective students and giving them advice and guidance on:

- How to submit their application
- Tips for writing their personal statements
- Where they can go to get school experience

As a result of this activity, the partnership will continue to grow and demonstrate that a collaborative model provides simplicity and clarity for our audiences. There are now opportunities for the group to review other areas of business which could be streamlined by working together. We have committed to run the event in the same way in 2020, with the possibility of running other events based on this model.

Most importantly the event provided clarity and inspiration for students embarking on this worthwhile career. It gave them the opportunity to hear and speak to other prospective students, newly qualified teachers and leaders in the education sector. It provided impartial advice on which route into teaching might best suit their circumstances and provided easy next steps to follow and support them along this journey.



**Figure 3: Prospective student feedback from the Get into Teaching South Yorkshire event**

Source: Sheffield Hallam University

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